

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 10342 01 OF 03 290940Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
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EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /074 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9206
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 10342

USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE POST ELECTION TRADE UNION SCENE:
THE CFDT CHANGES TACTICS

REF: (A) PARIS 09401, (B) PARIS 05436,
(C) PARIS 04252, (D) PARIS 04163,
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PAGE 02 PARIS 10342 01 OF 03 290940Z

(E) PARIS 03621

1. SUMMARY: IN THE FACE OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES'
RETURN TO POWER WITH AN UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG MAJORITY,
AND IN ADVANCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION, THE CFDT ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION TO
DROP POLITICAL IN FAVOR OF BREAD AND BUTTER DEMANDS;

AND TO, IN EFFECT, LOOSEN ITS TIES WITH THE CGT.
ALTHOUGH THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE DERAILED, FOR THE
TIME BEING, THE CGT'S POST-ELECTION PLANS, ANY NEGOTIATIONS THAT FOLLOW WILL BE DIFFICULT; AND THE
VARIOUS UNIONS' LONG TERM OBJECTIVES REMAIN UNCHANGED.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND ROUND OF THE LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS WERE AS THE CFDT FEARED AND FO HOPED:
A GOVERNMENT VICTORY (SEE REFS A AND D). HOWEVER,
ALL THE UNIONS WERE SURPRISED BY THE SIZE OF THE
MAJORITY'S VICTORY; AND THEN, INCREASINGLY, WERE
SEIZED BY ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THEM, AND FOR THE
PRESIDENT AS WELL.

3. PREDICTABLY, THE FIRST REACTION WAS A GENERAL
CALL BY ALL THE UNIONS FOR A RESUMPTION OF FREE
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING; AND A REQUEST BY FO, SPEEDILY
GRANTED, FOR A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD. THE
NEXT MAJOR EVENT WAS THE DECISION BY THE CFDT EXECUTIVE TO ADOPT, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, THE BASIC
PRINCIPLES OF THE MOREAU PLAN (SEE REFS C, D AND E):
DROPPING POLITICAL IN FAVOR OF BREAD AND BUTTER
DEMANDS, AND A LOOSENING OF THE ALLIANCE WITH THE
CGT. ANNOUNCING THE NEW POLICY AT A MARCH 22 PRESS
CONFERENCE, CFDT GENERAL SECRETARY MAIRE STATED THAT
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PAGE 03 PARIS 10342 01 OF 03 290940Z

HIS UNION WANTED GENUINE BARGAINING ON REAL ISSUES,
AND WAS PREPARED TO COMPROMISE. UNITY OF ACTION
WITH THE CGT, HE ADDED, WAS STILL POSSIBLE, BUT ONLY
IF THERE WERE COMMON GOALS BETWEEN THE TWO UNIONS.
HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT, THE PRECEDING EVENING, HIS
UNION HAD FORMALLY REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE
PRESIDENT, THE FIRST SUCH MEETING BETWEEN THE CFDT
AND A FRENCH CHIEF EXECUTIVE SINCE 1965.

4. THE CFDT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS SWITCH IN TACTICS
PRECEDED, BY SOME HOURS, THE PRESIDENT'S OWN SPEECH
IN WHICH HE CALLED FOR A NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND
DIALOGUE (SEE PARIS 09994), AND IT EFFECTIVELY UPSTAGED THE FO'S MOVE. THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE
ELYSEE ANNOUNCED THAT FO WOULD MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT
THAT MORNING, IT ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT THAT MEETING
WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY ONES WITH THE CGC AND CFDT THE
NEXT DAY. ANNOUNCEMENTS OF MEETINGS WITH, INTER ALIA,
ALL THE OTHER NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS, OTHER THAN THE
TEACHERS' FEN, QUICKLY FOLLOWED. (THE PRESIDENTIAL
DECISION TO POINTEDLY RELEGATE FEN TO JUNIOR STATUS
MAY MARK JUST THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE THAT UNION'S

LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE -- SEE PARIS 3599). IN THE WAKE
OF ALL THESE MOVES, IT IS NOW GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT
IMPORTANT NEGOTIATIONS OF SOME KIND WILL FOLLOW THE
FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IN EARLY APRIL.

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PAGE 01 PARIS 10342 02 OF 03 290939Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 03 PARIS 10342

5. THESE SAME DEVELOPMENTS HAD THE EFFECT OF DE-
RAILING WHAT HAD BEEN GENERALLY REGARDED AS THE CGT'S
POST-ELECTION PLAN: THE IMPOSITION OF A NEW "GRENELLE"
ON WHAT IT HAD ASSUMED WOULD BE A WEAK MAJORITY,
THROUGH JOINT CGT-CFDT PRESSURE (SEE REF B). THERE

HAS BEEN NO SIGN OF TROUBLE; AND AS THE WEEK PRO-
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PAGE 02 PARIS 10342 02 OF 03 290939Z

GRESSED, THE CGT HAS BEEN FORCED TO RETREAT FROM ITS
MONDAY CALL FOR IMMEDIATE NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS ON
THE BASIS OF THE COMMON PROGRAM'S SOCIAL PLANK
("...WHAT THE WORKERS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN
THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX, THEY CAN GET, AT LEAST IN
PART, THROUGH UNION ACTION....") TO FRIDAY'S
ASSURANCES BY GENERAL SECRETARY SEGUY TO FIGARO
THAT HIS UNION WAS WILLING TO BARGAIN, IN GOOD FAITH,
ON REAL ISSUES. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE RETURN OF
A STRONG MAJORITY AND THE DEFECTION OF THE CFDT
(IN FACT, IF NOT IN NAME) PRECLUDED THE EXERCISE OF
PRESSURE BY THE CGT. BY WEEK'S END, HOWEVER, THAT
UNION SEEMED TO BE RECOVERING ITS BALANCE, ANNOUNCING
THAT IT WAS PARTICIPATING IN THE APRIL 5 EUROPE-WIDE
DAY OF ACTION CALLED BY THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION; HAVING ITS CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS
DEMAND IMMEDIATE CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS; AND PROPOSING,
IN EFFECT, TO CUT THE CHRISTIAN CFTC OUT OF ANY ROLE
IN THE ANTICIPATED NATIONAL BARGAINING.

6. COMMENT: PRIVATELY, THE CFDT ASSURES US THAT THE
CHANGES IN ITS TACTICS ARE REAL AND REPRESENT A
GENUINE VICTORY FOR THE MODERATES. MAIRE, MOREOVER,
HAS ALREADY GIVEN A CLEAR SIGN OF THEIR WILLINGNESS
TO COMPROMISE BY DROPPING THE LEFT'S DEMAND FOR A
MINIMUM WAGE AT F 2,400 PER MONTH (A DEMAND THE CFDT
HAD PRIVATELY FELT HAD BEEN A MAJOR ERROR) AND
ADOPTING THE CFTC POSITION (RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE
TO THAT AMOUNT, IN CONSTANT FRANCES, IN STAGES,
OVER A 1-2 YEAR PERIOD). IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN,
HOWEVER, JUST HOW MUCH "GIVE" THERE IS IN THE CFDT
POSITIONS, AND IF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE CAN KEEP THE
MORE MILITANT ELEMENTS FROM PUSHING POLITICAL DEMANDS.
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PAGE 03 PARIS 10342 02 OF 03 290939Z

(MAIRE HAS POINTEDLY SAID THAT DEMANDS RAISED BY
CONSTITUENT UNIONS WILL BE SCREENED FOR CONTENT.)

7. QUITE APART FROM THE CFDT'S POSITIONS, THERE IS
ALSO SOME QUESTION OF JUST WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM
ANY NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION
IS NOT ENCOURAGING, AND FO AND OTHERS SEEM CONVINCED
OF THE NEED FOR MODERATION IN THEIR DEMANDS. MORE-

OVER, THE SPEED AND STRUCTURE OF ANY NEGOTIATIONS
WILL BE OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE. THE CFDT HAS PUBLICLY
GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT "THREE OR FOUR MONTHS" TO GET
THINGS MOVING AFTER WHICH, IT WARNS, IT WILL REVERT
TO POLITICALLY ORIENTED ACTION (THE CGT HAS GIVEN
UNTIL MAY); AND BOTH FO AND THE CFDT HAVE SEPARATELY
WARNED AGAINST BIG NEGOTIATIONS THAT WILL TRY TO BRING
TOGETHER EVERYONE TO SETTLE EVERYTHING AT THE NATIONAL
LEVEL. BO TH UNIONS SEE THOSE KINDS OF NEGOTIATIONS
AS PLAYING INTO THE CGT'S HANDS BY SETTING UP A
CLUMSY APPARATUS WHICH WILL INVITE THE CONFRONTA-
TION AND DEADLOCK THEY BELIEVE SEGUY WANTS; AND THEY
INDEPENDENTLY PROPOSE, INSTEAD, DECENTRALIZED BARGAIN-
ING ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES, WITH NATIONAL

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PAGE 01 PARIS 10342 03 OF 03 290935Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 03 OF 03 PARIS 10342

BARGAINING BEING RESERVED FOR A FEW REALLY NATIONAL ISSUES. (FOR ITS PART, THE CGT, ALTHOUGH NOW SAYING IT TOO IS IN FAVOR OF DECENTRALIZED BARGAINING, HAS MADE ITS MAJOR DEMAND A CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSAL WHICH SEEMINGLY COULD ONLY BE RESOLVED THROUGH SOME KIND OF NATIONAL SETTLEMENT, INVOLVING EVERYONE: A MINIMUM WAGE AT F 2,400, AND THE INDEXING OF ALL OTHER WAGES
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PAGE 02 PARIS 10342 03 OF 03 290935Z

AND SALARIES BY A FORMULA TO BE AGREED UPON.)

8. PREDICTABLY, THE CFDT AND FO ARE NOT AGREED ON WHAT ARE THOSE FEW KEY NATIONAL ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE DEALT WITH, AND THIS ONLY SERVES TO UNDERSCORE THE FACT THAT THEIR SEEMING CONVERGENCE OF VIEWS IS MORE PROCEDURAL THAN SUBSTANTIVE. THE TWO UNIONS STILL DISAGREE ON A WIDE RANGE OF BASIC ISSUES; AND REMAIN IDEOLOGICAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL RIVALS. MOREOVER, THE CFDT HAS NOT CHANGED ITS BASIC OBJECTIVE: A POLITICALLY IMPOSED FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE IN SOCIETY IN ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS. SPEAKING AT THE MARCH 22 PRESS CONFERENCE, MAIRE REAFFIRMED THAT THAT UNION'S PLACE IS WITH THE POLITICAL LEFT, AND THAT IT BELIEVES THAT WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF THE COMMUNISTS THE LEFT WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO TAKE POWER IN FRANCE. THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, IS HOW TO OBTAIN THE COOPERATION OF A COMMUNIST PARTY THAT REMAINS: "...STALINIST, HARD-LINE, AND SUSPICIOUS". IT IS THAT ENDURING, IF CURRENTLY EXASPERATED, CFDT COMMITMENT TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNISTS THAT IS THE BIGGEST GULF THAT SEPARATES MAIRE FROM BERGERON.
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